



You've Come A Long Way, Mitch

By Rebecca Burkhardt

Life wasn't always so rosy for Mitch. He spent over 30 years living in an institution. While it was a private (versus state) facility, it was still an institution. Days spent in mindless activities repeated infinitum.

In the Spring of 2005, Mitch moved out of the institution as part of Jay Nolan Community Services' Supported Living. He moved into his own apartment, with support staff of his own choosing. Such a big change can be daunting, but Mitch took to his new life with enthusiasm. It usually takes months before someone settles into supported living and is ready to add other new things like a job or activities – not Mitch! Within a couple of months of moving to Supported Living, Mitch had a job working 15 hours a week at the local Petco.

Mitch loves working at Petco and Petco loves having Mitch as an employee where he has taken on additional tasks and takes pride in doing a great job everyday. He also loves being able to make decisions about how to spend his days. He loves the freedom of being able to do his own personal chores like laundry. He enjoys being able to make his own meals. This year, Mitch began using Facilitated Communication to augment his communication skills. And like everything else he has tried, Mitch took to FC like a dream. He has entire conversations with his staff using FC.

But there is more to life than working, cooking and cleaning. Mitch and his staff enjoy taking day trips to local attractions, including the Aquarium of the Pacific.

Despite the fact that he spent the majority of his life in an institution, Mitch has embraced his new life and has had great success in Supported Living. We know the next few years will bring even greater challenges, successes and joys for Mitch.